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ABSTRACT

A 10-week program to increase assignment completion was implemented with 10 sixth graders who rarely completed assignments. This behavior modification program entailed the use of an assignment completion contract for the students. The criteria for meeting this contract increased each week. When students met the weekly criteria, they were given a reward, such as computer play time or bonus points for buying items at a school store. The contract was to be brought home for the parents' signature. Parents would also provide appropriate home rewards if the contract criteria were met. The program entailed daily assessment of student classwork and homework assignment completion by teachers, and positive verbal praise by teachers for appropriate student behavior. As a result of participating in the program: (1) seven students increased assignment completion by at least 50 percent, with an average increase of 69 percent; (2) seven students exceeded weekly assignment completion goals at least 80 percent of the time; and (3) eight parents cooperated with the program by signing the weekly contracts and providing home rewards. A reference list of 16 items is provided. Appendices include samples of an assignment completion rating scale, a parent notification letter, an assignment completion contract, and an assignment completion 10-week log. (BC)

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INCREASING ASSIGNMENT COMPLETION OF SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS THROUGH BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

by
RENEE POSTON

A Practicum Report
submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Educational Specialist.

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Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Renee M. Poston

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Abstract

Increasing Assignment Completion of Sixth Grade Students Through Behavior Modification.
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Descriptors: Behavior Modification/Contingency Management/Token Economy/Motivation Techniques/Incentives/Rewards/Homework/Positive Reinforcement/Parent School Relationship/Performance Contracts/Student Motivation

The researcher focuses on increasing assignment completion of sixth grade students through behavior modification. The target population is 10 sixth grade students between the ages of 11 and 13 years. The program entailed the development of weekly changing-criterion assignment completion contracts with accompanying rewards and privileges, the awarding of weekly group-contingent and student responsibility bonus points, daily assessment of classwork and homework assignment completion by the teachers, daily positive verbal praise for appropriate behavior by the teachers and practicum writer, and parent involvement through a home-based reinforcement program. Results indicated that 7 out of 10 students increased assignment completion by at least 50 percent with an average increase of 69 percent, 7 out of 10 students exceeded weekly assignment completion goals at least 80 percent of the time and 8 out of 10 parents signed the weekly contracts and provided home rewards, when appropriate, at least 80 percent of the time. Appendices include samples of a student contract, teacher assignment completion rating scale, parent notification letter, assignment completion 10-week log, and a bonus point account record.

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CHAPTER 1

Purpose

For the past two years, this practicum author has been an assistant principal. Previous experience includes one year as a regular classroom teacher, four years as an alternative education teacher, and four years as a remedial reading and mathematics teacher at the target school.

School X was built in 1960. It is one of 95 elementary schools and 13 sixth grade centers in the twelfth largest school district in the United States. It is located in a low-income inner-city neighborhood.

The school population is comprised of 423 students of which 35 percent are black, 56 percent are white, eight percent are hispanic, and one percent are Asian. Of the 423 students, 51 percent receive free or reduced lunch. Forty-six neighborhood students are assigned to two self-contained kindertgarten classes and 21 to a Head Start class. Three hundred fifty-six students are enrolled in sixth grade.

Eighty-eight percent of the sixth grade students,

the target population, are bussed to school from several socioeconomically-different sections of town. Students are assigned to four teams. Eighty-four students are assigned to the gifted/talented team with 21 students receiving gifted services. Two hundred thirty-four students are assigned to two regular teams. Thirty-eight students are assigned to the alternative education team.

Of the 356 sixth grade students, 25 receive Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) services, four receive Emotionally Handicapped (EH) services, 17 receive Speech services, 65 receive remedial reading and mathematics (ECIA) services, and eight receive services through the bilingual program.

Instruction is delivered by the teachers through an intermediate specialization model wherein students report to two or more specialized subject-area teachers daily.

The school is staffed by one principal and assistant principal, two counselors, one media specialist and the following teachers: eight regular sixth grade, two gifted, two talented, two alternative education, one full-time SLD, one part-time EH, two physical education, one music, one part-time art, one part-time strings, and two kindergarten. One

Head Start instructor is also employed. The teachers have an average of 18 years experience.

The following aides provide instructional assistance: two alternative education, four ECIA, one part-time bilingual, two kindergarten, and one Head Start.

The following professionals offer additional services on a part-time basis: speech therapist, school psychologist, school social worker, kindergarten diagnostician and school nurse.

An examination of the first grading period report cards by the principal and practicum writer indicated that 13 percent of the 356 sixth grade students received a D or an F in the conduct behavior areas of assignment completion whether it be homework or classwork.

Unsatisfactory assignment completion habits of sixth grade students has often been a concern of teachers, parents, counselors, and administrators of the target school. Each year teachers complain about the frustrating and disappointing experience of working with students who fail to complete assigned work especially since the students are capable of doing so in the homogeneously-grouped classes. Some concerned parents seem to be equally frustrated when

they discuss the problem with teachers, counselors, and administrators. The school administrators have found through past report card reviews that a need for improvement was most often indicated in three of nine conduct areas: practicing self-discipline, completing classroom assignments and completing homework assignments.

A program to systematically and specifically monitor, encourage, and reinforce appropriate assignment completion behavior has not been implemented at the target school. Individual student contracts that focus on improving specific behaviors are not used by the regular classroom teacher because behavior modification programs are time-consuming and become unmanageable in large classes. Only exceptional and alternative education teachers, with smaller class loads who have some training in behavior modification techniques, currently use individual contracts that focus on modifying specific behaviors.

Occasionally, daily reports initiated by the counselor or teacher, most often as a result of a parental request for daily feedback from the teacher, are sent home with specific students. Parental requests for a daily report are often made either after scholarship warnings are distributed mid-way through

each nine-week grading period or after report cards are issued and unsatisfactory grades are indicated.

Daily report procedures involve the teachers, students, and parents. Each subject area teacher indicates an S or a U in academics or behavior on the daily report and also provides incomplete homework information. The parent signs the report daily and returns it with the student. These procedures are often ineffective for several reasons as follows:

1. The daily report does not include information about specific behaviors. Nine conduct areas are included in one behavior grade. Only incomplete homework is specified.
2. The students are totally responsible for presenting the daily report to the teacher. Often the students forget to present the reports or lose them.
3. Parents often fail to follow-through. They do not ask the students for the reports and fail to sign them.
4. The daily report is used for informational purposes to provide feedback to the parents. Students are not necessarily rewarded for appropriate behavior or satisfactory grades by the parents or the teachers.

5. The daily report procedures might be used consistently for a few weeks and then dropped. There are no follow-up procedures.

The school-wide reward system for appropriate behavior that is presently used at the target school is ineffective in terms of motivating students to improve conduct grades because rewards are infrequently given and unattainable by many. After each nine-week grading period, students who attain all A's and B's in nine conduct areas are recognized in the school newspaper and given a pencil. Students who receive satisfactory (C's) conduct grades are not recognized and neither are the students who improve from one grading period to the next (i.e., C to B or D to C). Students therefore become discouraged and unmotivated.

Some teachers reward the entire class of Fridays if they have good overall weekly conduct grades. However, specific behavior areas are not monitored or rewarded.

Based on the aforementioned information, the purpose of this practicum was to design and implement a behavior modification program with a select group of sixth grade students to increase assignment completion.

The sample group included four white males, three black males, and three white females ranging in age from 11 - 13 years. Above average achievement test scores were indicated for two students, average scores for three, and below average scores for five. Three students received SLD services, five received remedial reading or math services and one received gifted services. Four students had been retained one time. Five students were completing approximately 25 percent of classwork and homework assignments combined in one or more subject areas, four were completing approximately 15 percent and one was completing approximately five percent.

The primary goal of this practicum was to increase assignment completion of 10 sixth grade students. A secondary goal was to involve parents in a home-based reinforcement program.

The specific objectives written for this practicum were as follows:

1. After 10 weeks of implementation of the Assignment Completion Behavior Modification Program, the students would increase assignment completion by at least 50 percent as documented by the Assignment Completion Rating Scale and weekly contract assignment

completion percentages recorded on the Assignment Completion Program 10-Week Log.

2. During the program implementation, 7 out of 10 students would meet or exceed individual weekly assignment completion goals 80 percent of the time as documented by weekly contract assignment completion percentages recorded on the Assignment Completion Program 10-Week Log.
3. During the program implementation, 7 out of 10 parents would sign the weekly assignment completion contracts and provide a home-based reward or privilege, if weekly goals were met, 80 percent of the time as indicated on the weekly contracts and the Assignment Completion Program 10-Week Log.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Research

The failure of students to complete assignments as well as other inappropriate classroom behaviors have traditionally been a concern for educators. This is evidenced by research and the past experiences of this practicum writer. Educators are continually seeking solutions to such problems.

Drew et al. (1982) state that "reinforcement procedures such as token economies and point systems with privilege and item exchanges have, in many cases, provided an answer to such problems" (p.540). The researchers also mention one possible drawback of behavior modification programs, namely, that they are time-consuming for the classroom teacher. However, the authors propose a possible solution to this problem through the use of a home-based reinforcement program.

Two elementary students with a long history of difficulty in completing assigned classwork were involved in the study. The parents rewarded the child with verbal praise and outdoor play if daily

math assignments were completed with 76 percent accuracy. Home visits and phone contacts with parents by the researchers were a part of the program. Immediate significant changes in rates of both assignment completion and accuracy were reported.

Johnston and McLaughlin (1982) report that token reinforcement programs, as demonstrated by several researchers, can be used to change or control behavior and have been effectively used to increase study behavior and academic achievement and decrease disruptive behavior. The writers also point out some potential problems of token economy programs involving ease of implementation and expense. Free time was therefore selected as the reinforcer with a seven-year-old to increase assignment completion and maintain assignment accuracy. A shaping procedure was used whereby the criterion for reinforcement was increased in graduated steps. Results indicated that assignment completion increased as the criterion for free time increased while a high level of accuracy was maintained.

Metcalf and Feldman (1982) found some evidence that a token reward-cost response contingency plan could be successfully used with 13 mildly retarded students, ranging in age from 7 to 12 years, to con-

trol disruptive behaviors and increase attending behaviors including finishing assignments. Students were involved in the development of the contingency management plan and were rewarded for attending behaviors through free time, verbal praise and purchase privileges. Fines were imposed for disruptive behaviors and a negative note was sent home to parents.

According to Litzenberger (1978), teachers often believe that assignment completion is the best measure of student performance rather than attending behavior. Students are often quite capable of completing assignments, but fail to produce at an acceptable level. The researcher designed an intervention procedure which included a combination of approaches to increase the assignment completion of 35 students in grades 1 to 5 whose assignment completion fell below the 75 percent level.

Students were taught specific skills to modify their own behavior and were involved in self-instruction procedures during which the experimenter modeled assignment completion tasks for the students. Students were also responsible for recording assignment completion information daily. Parents were asked to provide liberal amounts of praise daily if 100 percent of assignment completion was achieved. A token economy

system was used whereby students earned daily points for 100 percent assignment completion. The administrators involved were asked to encourage students to complete assignments. Results reflected a .05 level of significant change for the majority of students.

A changing-criterion behavior modification design was used by Heider (1979) with a nine-year-old whose assignment completion rate was at nearly a zero percent level. The student earned free time with the school psychologist as a reward for task completion. The weekly task completion criterion was increased each week. The student exceeded the task completion goals each week for five weeks.

Kornswiet and Yarnall (1981) contend that "token economy programs have produced significant results along many behavioral dimensions" (p. 85). In an attempt to teach appropriate attending and task completion behaviors to an easily distracted, visually impaired 11-year-old, a token economy system was adopted whereby the teacher reinforced the student for remaining on task for a specified cumulative amount of time. The student received a token for each correct response, as well as for completed assignments. Tokens could be used to purchase items

from a written list. Verbal praise was also given by the teacher. On-task behavior increased from 49 to 96 percent.

The use of additional methods to support and enhance the effectiveness of a token economy system for behavior management, with an intermediate class of emotionally handicapped students, ages 6 to 10, whose level of attention and on-task behavior was unsatisfactory, was examined by Stetson (1988). Daily review of class rules, group-contingent free time which was planned by the students, self-management involving the recording of behavioral information by the students, and a token economy system, which entailed the loss of points for disruptive behavior and the rewarding of points for appropriate behavior, were all included. After 10 weeks of program implementation, the level of attention of the students was raised to 100 percent. The students remained on task, thereby completing assignments, and attentive to instruction.

Fifteen low achieving, disruptive, and disinterested seventh grade students enrolled in an alternative education class were involved in a 12 week behavioral management program developed and implemented by Anderson (1987). The primary goal of the program

was to increase student responsibility for their own actions and attention to learning. A secondary goal was to increase parental support and involvement in the program.

Treatment contracts, home contingency contracts, daily report cards, which included behavioral and academic performance information recorded by the teacher, and homework records which included information recorded by the student and initiated by the teacher, teacher observation reports, and administrator reports were used. Parents were asked to sign the daily report cards and initial the homework records. Students could earn tokens for assignment completion, attendance, and punctuality to spend on free time, items, or parties. If all of the students earned 8-10 points weekly, the entire group received bonus points. A free time pass was issued if a student received an average weekly academic grade of 75 percent. If an average weekly behavior rating was indicated, the student received a ticket for the activity grab bag.

A parent meeting was held during which parents were encouraged to establish quiet study areas at home and develop a reasonable home reward and consequence system. Parents were asked to review the

home contingency contracts at least every 10 to 15 days and to establish reasonable expectations for success.

Program results indicated that 10 of 15 students demonstrated improved behavior, 9 of 15 students improved in academic achievement, 10 of 15 students showed a decline in the number of office referrals, 12 of 15 students improved attendance, and 9 of 15 parents became actively involved and supportive of the program.

Two studies that examined the effectiveness of group-oriented contingency systems were conducted by Bear and Richards (1980) and Darveaux (1984).

Bear and Richards used an interdependent group-oriented contingency system to improve the academic performance of five middle school students. Initially, extra recess time was given to an entire group of ten students if the weekly academic class average was increased. However, at the request of the students who wanted more immediate rewards, the criteria for awarding extra recess time was changed to be dependent upon daily, not weekly, averages. The authors reported that the program was effective in improving the performance of the five target students while maintaining or improving the performance of

the non-target students as well. Although harmful group pressure and the negative effects of an uncooperative student were cited as potential disadvantages of such a group contingent program, neither of these problems were encountered in this study.

Darveaux (1984) evaluated the effectiveness of a group contingency intervention with two second grade boys, who were at high risk for placement in a behaviorally impaired program, to improve motivation, increase assignment completion, and decrease disruptive behavior. The target students were assigned to two teams. When a class rule was violated, the entire team was penalized through the use of negative check marks. When students completed assignments with 75 percent accuracy and participated actively in classroom activities, merits were given. Merits could be used to erase the negative check marks. Students could thereby compensate for disruptive behavior by being academically oriented. Rewards included free time, story time or candy. Marked reductions in disruptive behaviors of the two target students were realized as well as increases in the rates of correctly completed assignments for the entire class and even greater increases for the two target students.

The various behavior modification programs presented in the previously discussed studies were shown to be effective in producing the desired results. Various methods for rewarding students were incorporated including verbal praise, outdoor play, free time activities, purchasing privileges, free time with an adult, and parties. Several authors have indicated the importance of incorporating appropriate reward systems when planning behavioral interventions.

Daly et al. (1984) observe that "in applying behavioral principles, it is imperative that effective reinforcers or rewards be identified...because to be reinforcing, the reward must increase the probability that the rewarded activity will recur" (p. 520). The reward must be reinforcing to the student. The writers investigated the accuracy of teacher predictions of student reward preferences and found that teachers tended to overrate the popularity of certain rewards. They suggest that students be involved in selecting their own rewards and that effective rewards, particularly for boys, may be those outside of the classroom.

Sharpley and Sharpley (1981), through a literature review, examined the comparative effectiveness of contingent versus non-contingent rewards in the class-

room. The authors concluded that "the use of operant procedures to modify the behavior of school children appears to depend for its success (at least in part) upon the perceived contingency of the pupil's response and the teacher's reward" (p. 253).

Ten practical and specific behavioral management techniques for practicing positive reinforcement are presented by McDaniel (1987). Among the techniques discussed are to praise effectively by being specific and focusing on the behavior and not the person, to establish token economies with rewards being contingent upon specific behaviors, to use premacking (a technique named after David Premack) whereby students exercise choice in determining the reinforcers for appropriate behavior, and to vary positive reinforcement by using new techniques, ideas, and reinforcers.

Several characteristics of effective reinforcement procedures, as evidenced by research, are described by McGinnis et.al. (1984): (1) the reinforcement must be seen as rewarding to the child; (2) the reinforcement should be given immediately after the behavior; (3) the child must make the connection between the behavior exhibited and the reinforcement received; (4) in general, the greater the amount

of reinforcement, the greater the effect on performance; (5) the desirable behavior must occur sufficiently frequently for the reinforcement to be provided often enough; and (6) reinforcement should be given on a rich schedule at first, then thinned to an intermittent schedule.

Maurer (1985) claims that the basic premise of behavior modification "is that individuals engage in behavior that rewards them and the process of behavior change involves changing the reward system so that new behavior is established and unwanted behavior is eliminated" (p. 69). The author also contends that rewards must be both age-appropriate and inexpensive.

Maurer describes the five stages to completing a successful contract for behavior modification:

1. Select an observable behavior that can be changed and label it in concrete terms.
2. Observe the behavior to establish a baseline or a recording of how often it happens.
3. Negotiate with the student about the observed behavior, the reason for change, and the rewards to be obtained.
4. Establish a contract, either written or

verbal, that both can agree on. The language of the contract should be as specific as possible.

5. Always determine a date to rewrite or renegotiate the contract. You may need to tighten it up or even relax it, depending on the progress of the student.

According to Canter (1976), a positive reward system should be provided as often as possible, include something a child wants and enjoys, and be planned out before being used.

The writer of this practicum, through informal conversations with the exceptional educational teachers and counselors at the target school as well as a counselor from another school, has determined that weekly contract goals must be realistic so that students experience success, that rewards and privileges should be selected by the students whenever possible, and that students should be praised on a daily basis for appropriate behavior.

Solution Strategy

The solution strategy was to develop and implement a behavior modification program with sixth grade

students to increase assignment completion. Although not all of the strategies and techniques previously discussed in the literature review were implemented in their entirety, portions were profitable in shaping the implementation portion of this practicum.

The Assignment Completion Behavior Modification Program wasimplemented by the practicum writer with 10 sixth grade students who rarely or almost never complete assignments. The program entailed the development of weekly changing-criterion assignment completion contracts with accompanying rewards and privileges, the awarding of weekly group-contingent and student responsibility bonus points, daily assessment of classwork and homework assignment completion by the teachers, daily positive verbal praise for appropriate behavior by the teachers and practicum writer, and parent involvement through a home-based reinforcement program. Since behavior modification programs are often time-consuming, the utilization of teacher time was minimal. Program implementation will involve primarily the practicum writer and the students. However, teachers and parents also played an important part in the success of the program. Since home-based reinforcement programs have been shown to be effective, parent cooperation was solicited.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The Assignment Completion Behavior Modification Program was designed and implemented to involve primarily the students and practicum writer in an attempt to increase assignment completion. However, teachers and parents played an important role in the implementation and success of the program. The following discussion describes the procedures and activities utilized prior to and during program implementation. A follow-up plan is also included.

Prior to Program Implementation

Several weeks prior to program implmentation, on December 4, 1990, the faculty was informed of the program goals, procedures, and accompanying teacher responsibilities at a scheduled faculty meeting. Teachers were asked, on a voluntary basis, to refer students who rarely or almost never completed assignments to the program using the Assignment Completion Rating Scale (Appendix A: 43).

Twenty-seven students were referred to the program. Ten students who rarely or almost never completed homework and classwork (0 to 25 percent) were

randomly selected to participate by the practicum writer on December 20, 1990.

Parents were notified two weeks prior to program implementation on January 7, 1991, by letter (Appendix B: 45). A follow-up phone call to elicit parent cooperation and encourage the use of a home reinforcement program was made to each parent one week prior to program implementation on January 14, 1991. Parents were asked to sign the weekly Assignment Completion Contract (Appendix C: 47), to verbally praise their child if weekly assignment completion goals were met, and to provide a reward or privilege at home.

Students selected for the program met with the writer on January 14, 1991, one week prior to program implementation. The purpose and procedures of the program were discussed as well as student responsibilities. The Assignment Completion contract was reviewed. The students would be required to present the contract to the appropriate teachers, as well as to the program administrator on a daily basis. Each week the student would present the contract to his/her parent for a signature and return it to school.

Assignment completion goals for each student, for the first week of program implementation, were determined and recorded on the contract by the writer based upon the approximate assignment completion baseline percentages indicated on the Assignment Completion Rating Scales. Each student determined his/her weekly reward or privilege to be given if the assignment completion goal was met which was also recorded on the contract.

Bonus points were also discussed at this time. Students could earn bonus points if weekly assignment completion goals were exceeded, if the entire group met their weekly goals (group contingency), if the contract was not lost at any time during the week (student responsibility), and if the contract was signed by the parents. Bonus points would be used weekly to buy items from the program store or could be accumulated. Students who reached their weekly goals 80 percent of the time would be rewarded with a pizza party on the last day of program implementation.

Money and store items for the reward system were either donated by local businesses which were contacted by the author three months prior to program

implementation or provided by the writer.

10-Week Program Implementation (January 21 - March 28)

Teachers recorded daily assignment completion information on the student Assignment Completion Contracts and were expected to verbally praise the children if assignments were completed and to avoid negative comments.

Students presented their contracts to the writer daily. Assignment completion information was recorded on a contract copy which was filed in individual student folders in case a student lost his/her contract. Positive verbal praise and encouragement were provided. If a student failed to report to the program administrator at the end of each day, he/she was called to the office on the following morning for an explanation and/or encouragement. If a student continually failed to report, an attempt was made by the author to ask the teachers involved to remind the student of his/her responsibilities, to conference with the student, to change the contract reporting time or to alter the reward or privilege.

On Friday of each week, the weekly assignment completion percentage for each student was computed

by the administrator and/or student and recorded on the Assignment Completion Program 10-Week Log (Appendix D: 49). The student contracts were signed and dated by the writer, who indicated whether or not the weekly goals were met, and sent home to the parents. Parents signed the contracts and indicated whether or not a home reward was provided. This information was then recorded on the Assignment Completion Program 10-Week Logs when the students returned the contracts.

Students were also given a new contract each Friday which indicated the assignment completion goals for the following week. A changing criterion design was used whereby a five percent increase in assignment completion was expected each week for students whose assignment completion goals were met during the previous week.

Each Friday successful students were given their self-selected reward or privilege. For example, students could choose from a variety of free-time alternatives including playing computer, nintendo, outdoor or board games, attending popcorn parties with music, assisting in the office, running errands, visiting other classes or other activities within

reason. Students could also exchange their reward for 10 bonus points which would be added to the previously-earned points to spend on store items.

Weekly bonus point earnings and expenditures were recorded on the Assignment Completion Program 10-Week Log and the Assignment Completion Program Bonus Point Account Record (Appendix E: 51). Bonus points were used to buy a variety of items from the store whenever the students chose to during the 10-week implementation. The store included such things as pencils, notepads, markers, stickers, watches, games, stuffed animals, toys, etc. In addition to awarding bonus points for exceeding weekly goals, meeting the group-contingency criterion, returning the contract signed by parents, or showing responsibility by not losing the contract, points were also given if the student remembered to report to the writer daily with assignment completion information recorded and if the student completed 100 percent of his/her weekly assignments. These additional rewards were added during the third week of program implementation to reward students who were doing exceptionally well and who were consistently remembering to report to the program administrator and to motivate those who

occasionally or frequently were lax in their responsibility.

The aforementioned procedures were followed, each week, during the period of January 21 to March 28, 1991. On the last day of program implementation, students who had reached or exceeded their weekly goals 80 percent of the time celebrated by means of a pizza and ice cream party which included a movie.

Follow-Up to Program Implementation

Students who were successful in reaching the program assignment completion objectives were invited to continue in the program. Weekly assignment completion goals will be increased until the 80% level is attained. Students will then be expected to maintain or exceed this level until the end of the school year. Participants who reach their goals 7 out of 9 weeks will be rewarded with another party.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The results of the implemented Assignment Completion Behavior Modification Program have been evaluated using teacher rating scales, assignment completion percentage information recorded on the 10-week logs, parent reinforcement information recorded on the 10-week logs, and administrator records and observations.

The primary objective of the program was to increase assignment completion of 10 sixth grade students by at least 50 percent. Approximate baseline assignment completion percentages indicated by the teachers on the Assignment Completion Rating Scales were compared with the final weekly assignment completion percentages recorded by the writer on the Assignment Completion Program 10-Week Logs. Assignment completion averages were also computed and compared with baseline conditions as well as with teacher ratings at the end of program implementation. Seven out of 10 students increased assignment completion by at least 50 percent. The average in-

crease for those students was 69 percent with three students reaching or exceeding the 75 percent level. Three students did not reach the desired level of assignment completion. Therefore objective one was not met. Individual student assignment completion increases and averages appear in Table I below.

Table I
A Comparison of Increases in Assignment Completion for Individual Students

Student #	Baseline %	Ending %	Increase	Average *(#weeks)	Teacher Rating (Post)
1	25%	75%	50%	71%(8)	75%
2	25%	100%	75%	81%(10)	80%
3	25%	84%	59%	80%(10)	80%
4	15%	83%	68%	75%(10)	80%
5	15%	100%	85%	72%(9)	90%
6	15%	83%	68%	88%(10)	90%
7	25%	100%	75%	72%(9)	80%
8	5%	28%	23%	31%(9)	25%
9	15%	35%	20%	59%(6)	40%
10	25%	88% - (3 wks)	63% - (3 wks)	79%(3)	30%

(# Weeks) Average based on number of weeks that assignment completion information was available.

During the program implementation, 7 out of 10 students were expected to meet or exceed individual weekly assignment completion goals 80 percent of the time as documented by weekly contract assignment completion percentages recorded on the Assignment Completion Program 10-Week Logs. A changing criterion design was used whereby a five percent increase in assignment completion was expected each week for students whose goal was met during the previous week. Seven students met or exceeded this expectation. Three students exceeded weekly goals 80 percent of the time, one student 90 percent of the time, and three students 100 percent of the time. Objective two was therefore met.

It must be noted that the seven students who were successful in meeting the established criteria for the most part exceeded weekly program expectations. Individual student data is reported in Table II.

Table 11
A Comparison of Individual Student's
Weekly Assignment Completion Percentages

Student #	Baseline %	Weekly %									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	25%	71	91	A	57	81	64	65	ND	65	75
2	25%	50	64	52	100	88	85	75	96	100	100
3	25%	57	78	85	66	100	75	76	87	100	84
4	15%	50	88	87	50	75	100	60	63	100	83
5	15%	100	65	50	42	88	100	53	52	100	A
6	15%	100	88	100	100	100	90	88	40	90	83
7	25%	95	73	61	47	100	58	64	51	100	ND
8	5%	A	33	23	58	45	40	28	28	28	A
9	15%	50	ND	60	A	ND	100	60	50	35	ND
10	25%	75	75	75	88	ND	ND	A	ND	ND	ND

A - Absent
ND - Not Determined
Underlined Number - Weekly goal not met.
(Goal increased by 5% weekly)

The seven students who were successful in meeting the first two program objectives, as evidenced by the data presented in Tables I and II as well as administrator observations, tended to be highly motivated to exceed program expectations. They seemed to enjoy the daily contact with the program administrator. They were very excited about the pizza party which would be earned if weekly goals were met 80% of the time and wanted to earn bonus points for exceeding goals and being responsible. Bonus points were enthusiastically spent on store items. Interestingly enough, students often exchanged their weekly reward or privilege for points to buy store items rather than exercise free-time options. Teachers also commented about the motivation of the students to succeed.

On the other hand, the three students who did not achieve assignment completion goals either failed to present contracts to the teachers or report to the program administrator on a regular basis or were not motivated to complete assignments. These students were continually reminded of procedures and encouraged to participate by the writer. Some of the teachers also made an unsuccessful attempt to remind students

of their responsibilities. Therefore assignment completion information often could not be determined due to lack of information or absenteeism. However these students did improve slightly from baseline conditions.

It is interesting to note that two of the three students who were unable to meet their goals were assigned to the gifted/talented team. One student was staffed into the gifted program. Perhaps the reward system was unmotivating to these students or they were embarassed to present contracts to the teachers (although students did not admit this when questioned) in front of the other students. In fact, arrangements were made so that these students could present the contracts in private if they wished. However the students insisted that this was not necessary. Perhaps the children were experiencing difficulty with their assignments and unable to complete the work. These participants may have needed assistance in developing more effective work habits or study skills.

The purpose of objective three was to involve parents in a home-based reinforcement program. It was expected that 7 out of 10 parents would sign

the weekly contracts and provide weekly home rewards or privileges, when appropriate 80 percent of the time. This objective was evaluated through an examination of the information provided by parents on the returned weekly student Assignment Completion Contracts recorded on the 10-Week Logs.

Eight parents signed the contracts and provided home rewards, when appropriate, at least 80 percent of the time. Seven parents responded 100 percent of the time and one parent 80 percent of the time thereby exceeding program expectations. Therefore objective three was met. The remaining two parents responded 20 percent and 10 percent of the time respectively. This was due, in part, to the failure of the students to take the contracts home.

Most parents were extremely supportive of the program. During the initial phone conversations held prior to program implementation, all parents responded favorably. Three parents contacted the program administrator during implementation to express their enthusiasm about the progress their children were making. In fact, two parents asked if the program could be continued beyond the 10 week implementation. Parents also wrote positive comments

on the contracts in response to the positive phrases indicated by the writer praising students for their weekly accomplishments. Program results reinforced the determination of the author that the Assignment Completion Behavior Modification Program was an overall success. Although three students failed to increase assignment completion to the desired levels, success was not based entirely on the evaluation results of each objective but also on the successes and enthusiasm of the students who consistently exceeded program expectations as well as the positive comments and support of the parents and teachers.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

The results of the Assignment Completion Behavior Modification Program will be shared with the principal and faculty of School X so that similar programs can be planned and implemented in the future based upon specific school needs. Programs to improve attendance or assist disruptive students might be designed for the following school year.

It is recommended that such programs be implemented as close as possible to the beginning of the school year so that inappropriate or unwanted behavior patterns are not established or worsened. Of course, some time is needed to adequately determine baseline conditions.

A word of caution must be included concerning the immediate withdrawal or reduction of reward systems for students who meet the expectations of a behavior modification program. The reward system should be reduced or shifted gradually during maintenance of the contractual system so that the un-

appropriate or unwanted behavior does not reoccur. The author intends to continue to work with successful students, during the last grading period, until an 80 percent assignment completion level is reached and maintained. Administrator contact and rewards will then gradually be reduced.

An outline of the program will be made available to staff members at the target school or other schools, as requested. The writer will work closely with any staff member who wishes assistance in implementing a similar program with possible accompanying modifications.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Assignment Completion Rating Scale

Student Name_____Date_____

Please Circle:

	Almost Never (0%)	Rarely (25%)	Sometimes (50%)	Often (75%)	Almost Always (100%)
Completes Classwork	1	2	3	4	5
Completes Homework	1	2	3	4	5

NOTE: If exact percentages of assignment completion are known, please indicate below.

Classwork_____ Homework_____

Teacher Signature_____

Subject_____

Appendix B

Parent Notification Letter

School Letterhead

DATE_____

Dear_____:

Your child,_____, is not completing classwork and/or homework at a satisfactory level. I will be working closely with your child for 10 weeks to motivate him/her to complete his/her assignments. I will develop a weekly contract with your child that I will ask you to sign. Your child will earn a reward or privilege on Fridays if his/her weekly contract goals are met. I will be calling you within the next two weeks to explain the program further.

If you have any questions please call_____ _____ at 237-8301.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Appendix C

Assignment Completion Contract

Student Name _____ Week of _____

SUBJECT	MON. CW	MON. HW	TUES. CW	TUES. HW	WED. CW	WED. HW	THURS. CW	THURS. HW	FRI. CW	FRI. HW

S-Satisfactory
U-Unsatisfactory
NA-Not Applicable

CW-Classwork
HW-Homework

Teachers: Please indicate S or U for completion of classwork and/or homework. Mark NA if, for example, homework was not assigned. Please initial the box also.

GOAL FOR WEEK _____
REWARD/PRIVILEGE (IF GOAL MET) _____
GOAL WAS MET: YES NO

Assistant Principal Signature _____
Date: _____

Parent Signature _____
Date _____

Reward/Privilege Given at Home: Yes____ No____

Appendix D

Assignment Completion Program 10-Week Log

STUDENT NAME _____

WEEK _____
ACE _____
IWE _____
EWE _____

BONUS POINT TOTAL _____
EXCEED GOAL _____
GROUP GOAL _____
COMPACT RESPONSIBILITY _____
PARENT SIGNATURE _____

100% REWARD yes / no

WEEK _____
ACE _____
IWE _____
EWE _____

BONUS POINT TOTAL _____
EXCEED GOAL _____
GROUP GOAL _____
COMPACT RESPONSIBILITY _____
PARENT SIGNATURE _____

100% REWARD yes / no

WEEK _____
ACE _____
IWE _____
EWE _____

BONUS POINT TOTAL _____
EXCEED GOAL _____
GROUP GOAL _____
COMPACT RESPONSIBILITY _____
PARENT SIGNATURE _____

100% REWARD yes / no

WEEK _____
ACE _____
IWE _____
EWE _____

BONUS POINT TOTAL _____
EXCEED GOAL _____
GROUP GOAL _____
COMPACT RESPONSIBILITY _____
PARENT SIGNATURE _____

100% REWARD yes / no

WEEK _____
ACE _____
IWE _____
EWE _____

BONUS POINT TOTAL _____
EXCEED GOAL _____
GROUP GOAL _____
COMPACT RESPONSIBILITY _____
PARENT SIGNATURE _____

100% REWARD yes / no

WEEK _____
ACE _____
IWE _____
EWE _____

BONUS POINT TOTAL _____
EXCEED GOAL _____
GROUP GOAL _____
COMPACT RESPONSIBILITY _____
PARENT SIGNATURE _____

100% REWARD yes / no

WEEK _____
ACE _____
IWE _____
EWE _____

BONUS POINT TOTAL _____
EXCEED GOAL _____
GROUP GOAL _____
COMPACT RESPONSIBILITY _____
PARENT SIGNATURE _____

100% REWARD yes / no

WEEK _____
ACE _____
IWE _____
EWE _____

BONUS POINT TOTAL _____
EXCEED GOAL _____
GROUP GOAL _____
COMPACT RESPONSIBILITY _____
PARENT SIGNATURE _____

100% REWARD yes / no

WEEK _____
ACE _____
IWE _____
EWE _____

BONUS POINT TOTAL _____
EXCEED GOAL _____
GROUP GOAL _____
COMPACT RESPONSIBILITY _____
PARENT SIGNATURE _____

100% REWARD yes / no

Appendix E

Assignment Completion Program
Bonus Point Account Record

STUDENT
NAME_____

DATE	POINTS EARNED	POINTS SPENT	BALANCE